

551 for girls and boys. *Nhwanin* is a girl's name, as it means "girl" and *Nwandjise* a boy's name as it means "boy" (1).

553 All these birth-names are abandoned later on, generally at the circumcision school, or at the age of puberty, in the clans where the custom of circumcising has disappeared; boys and girls then choose new names. Men and women who undergo initiation adopt a new name. So do those subjected to the treatment for possession; these take the name of their pretended possessor when he has made himself known. I refer the reader to Appendix II for further information regarding Thonga names.

845 *Premature Birth.* When a child is born prematurely and is very small and delicate, he is wrapped in the leaves of the castor-oil plant and put into a big ppt, which is then exposed to the heat of the sun. This is a true incubator, and the treatment is said to be attended with success (Tobane).

845 *Protracted Births and Illegitimate Births.* There would seem to be no relation between these; but to the Thonga mind, on the contrary, a protracted and difficult birth proves that the child is not legitimate. This conviction is so strong that when a woman knows that the child which she is going to bear is not the son of her husband (nuna) but of a lover (mbuye), she will admit this secretly to the principal midwife, in order to spare herself the pains of a difficult birth, as it is taboo to bear a "child of adultery" hiding the fact: it would cause the mother untold suffering.

Therefore, if the delivery lasts too long, the midwife will begin to have doubts as to the legitimacy of the child. The first thing she will do is to send word to the husband. He knows what it means. He takes in his *shifado* (2) a little of his semen, mixes it with water in a shell of sala (the big round fruit of the Strychnos) and the woman drinks it. It may be that then the child will "feel his father," if the husband is really his father, and that this will bring the birth to a prompt conclusion; but

(1) I know of an exception to this rule. The son of the Mabota chief was named *Nhwanin*, a girl's name, in order to deceive the malevolent powers which had killed his brothers and sisters.

(2) See Annotation 1 at the end of the volume in the collection of Latin notes written for medical men and ethnographers.

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177 Thonga boys are so fond of games that they even try to imitate those of the Europeans. In the accompanying illustration, they are seen sitting in two rows throwing some projectiles along the ground. I wondered what game this was, and was informed that these boys, having seen Portuguese officials playing billiards at the camp, had attempted to do the same, and this was the result!

C. THE AGE OF PUBERTY

I. *Circumcision rites.*

1) SPREAD AND ORIGIN OF CIRCUMCISION AMONGST THE THONGAS.

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866 As he grows up, the Thonga boy leaves the flock of goats and is entrusted with the care of the big cattle, oxen and cows, when his father owns any. He becomes very proud, and tyrannises over his younger brothers; he calls himself their "hosi," their chief, and sends them to work for him; in Maputju, big boys went so far as to scorn water brought from the pool by women, and only to use water specially fetched by small boys. If they grow so important in their own eyes, the reason is that special rites are performed on them during this period, rites which are calculated to give them great self-confidence. Amongst these rites, some have a direct relation with the sexual life and some represent only the entrance upon manhood. Let us begin with a study of circumcision, then we will take the other puberty rites and the habit of *gangisa*.

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304 In a great many Bantu tribes, the age of puberty is marked by ceremonies of initiation, often accompanied by circumcision. There is little doubt that circumcision was practised throughout the Thonga tribes in former times. It is still current with those Thongas who emigrated into the Transvaal, and this is not a custom borrowed from the Pedi clans, which have all preserved circumcision. Though the Thongas often receive initiation in Pedi schools, in the Spelonken, they possess their own schools

881 for the Nkunas near Leydsdorp. They have a special word for
304 the physical operation, *yimba*, (in Ronga *soka*) which is used together with *ngoma* (Sutho *goma*), the generic term for all the customs connected with it. (It must not be forgotten that the word *ngoma* is also used for other initiations, especially for the initiation of widows, as will be seen in Chap. II.)

881 Amongst the Ba-Ronga, circumcision was abandoned more
175 than a hundred years ago, before the arrival of Manukosi, and
304 they were called *Ba-butoya*, the cowards, by other Northern clans, who said they feared the sufferings of that cruel school. Mboza has seen some old Ronga men who had been circumcised probably at the beginning of the XIXth Century. It is well known that somewhat later Chaka put a stop to the custom amongst the Zulus; it did not fit in with the new military system inaugurated by him. When the Ngoni general Manukosi invaded the plains of the Low Country, it is not surprising that circumcision disappeared in those clans also. The constant fighting which prevailed in those troubled times did not allow men to stay three consecutive months in a circumcision lodge. It was feared also that circumcised boys would be killed by the enemy, being unable to run away in case of an invasion. But old men in the Bilen country assert that the *Ngoma* is a very old custom amongst the Thongas, and that it has long been practised by all their clans.

881 Is it possible to ascertain its *true origin*? My informants,
177 Viguet especially, were convinced that the *Ngoma* was brought
563 to the tribes of the Northern Transvaal by the *Ma-Lemba*, and it
304 is a historical fact that, as regards the Ba-Venda of that country, the rite was adopted quite recently under the influence of the *Ma-Lemba*. These *Ma-Lemba* are a very curious people, living amongst the Thongas and the Suthos of Zoutpansberg, just like the Jews amongst the European nations, without a chief, without national unity, but with characteristic customs to which they adhere from generation to generation... They resemble the Jews in the fact that they do not eat flesh unless all the blood has been first carefully drained away. They dread eating blood above all else, and they shave at each new moon. They brought with them

881 the metallurgic art and introduced domestic fowls into the country.
 177 All these facts tend to show that they have had intimate relations
 563 with Semitic peoples, and they themselves declare that they came from the North by sea and reached the coast after shipwreck. Now they practise circumcision with great assiduity and hold a special position in the lodges of the Spelonken. They are called there the masters of the Ngoma (1). Circumcision is wide-spread amongst Semitic nations, and one might be tempted to infer from these remarks that the custom has been taught to the Bantus by Semitic masters. This is certainly true as regards the Ba-Venda in the Spelonken (2).

In South Africa the Ngoma is much older than the arrival of the Ma-Lemba (which can be fixed some time during the XVIIIth century). What happened in Spelonken, through the agency of the Ma-Lemba, during the XIXth century, may have taken place at some earlier date in the case of other South African tribes, and the Semitic origin of the Ngoma is quite possible, though there is no proof at present extant.

2) GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CIRCUMCISION RITES.

881 I am treating here of the rites as they are met with amongst
 115 the Thongas of Spelonken especially ; my informants on this point have been Viguet, who was initiated some 60 years ago, and Valdo, a much younger man, who went through the rites 30 years ago; both are from Spelonken. There Thonga and Bvesha (Sutho) candidates enter the same lodges. A boy named Pikinini revealed to me the secret formulae as they are recited amongst the Nkunas (Leydsdorp). The rites certainly vary amongst the tribes and they seem to have been simplified in late years, but there is a general resemblance between them all. Pedis have two circumcision

(1) I note in a paper by the Rev. W. A. Norton on the puberty rites of the Basuto (S. A. *Journal of Science* March 1910) that, if a Bushman is in a lodge, he takes precedence amongst the Suthos and that there circumcision is derived from the Bushmen just as it is from the Ma-Lembain the Zoutpansberg.

(2) See my paper on the "Balemba of the Zoutpansberg" *Folklore*, Sept. 1908 and also, "Zidji," my South African novel, Chap. II. (Saint-Blaise, Foyer Solidariste).

881 schools during two consecutive years. The first is called *bulika*,
561 the second *buhwira*. Thongas have only the first, and it is the one described in the following pages.

I was never fortunate enough to penetrate into a lodge, as it is a great taboo. I tried once to obtain admittance, near Shiluvane, but in vain. But the rites have been described to me with such a wealth of detail that I seemed to have lived for three months with the candidates ! (1)

A French anthropologist, Mr A. van Gennep, published some years ago a book on *Les Rites de Passage* (Paris. Nourry 1909) which throws a great deal of light on these mysterious customs. He shows that a great number of rites have been inspired by the idea of passage from one place to another, and that all the rites belonging to this category present the same general features : in the first place the separation from the old state of things is symbolised by certain rites which he calls separation rites ; then begins a period of margin, where the individual or the group concerned is secluded from society and submitted to a number of taboos or rites ; thirdly, at the close of this period, the persons who have been tabooed are again received into the community as regular members by the aggregation rites. This classification applies perfectly to the Circumcision rites, which are a Rite of Passage par excellence, and I shall now try to explain them briefly in their natural sequence. For more details see *Zidji*, a South African novel which I published in 1910 (Foyer solidariste, Saint-Blaise, Switzerland) where a more elaborate description will be found.

3) THE THREE SERIES OF RITES OF CIRCUMCISION.

a) Separation rites.

821 The circumcision school (Ngoma) is held every fourth or fifth
881 year, and all the boys from ten to sixteen are sent to it by their

(1) A young colleague of mine, the Rev. A. Jaques was more fortunate than I and even succeeded in taking some photographs in the Masume Valley, near Shiluvane. This was a Pedi school, but, as stated above, there is no great difference between Pedi and Thonga "Sungi." These pictures are of great interest, and I am grateful to my friend for allowing me to reproduce them here.

82/ parents. Some may escape, but if they happen to be at hand on
 88/ the next occasion, they will be included by consent or by force.
 304/ Even an adult member of the tribe can be compelled to go through
 the initiation, if he is found in the country in an uncircumcised
 state. The *time of year* chosen for the opening of the school is a
 month during which the morning star appears, in winter. *Ngongo-*
mela, Venus, is the herald of the day. She precedes the sun, so
 she must lead the boys to their new life, from darkness to the
 light! (Valdo)

643 One day all the candidates are gathered in the capital ; for this
 881 school is the business of the chief, and has been arranged by the
 council of the headmen (tinduna) over which he presides ; he
 has the supervision of it, and will receive the fees from the initiated
 later on. Boys circumcised four years ago must also attend the
 whole school as shepherds (barisi, psitjiba), namely as servants of
 the men and watchers over the candidates. They have already
 partly built the lodge outside the village, in a remote place, not too
 far away however, because the women must bring food each day for
 all the inmates of the " yard of mysteries ".

881 After having slept in the capital, early in the morning, when
 Ngongomela rises in the East, the band of the uncircumcised
 goes out from the inhabited world to the wilderness, to the lodge.
 This is the first separation rite. The second is this : they find on
 the road a fire made of strongly scented wood ; when they smell
 the smoke, they must jump over it. This rite is called : *Tlula*
ritsa, to jump over the firebrand.

533 Later on, when still at some distance from the newly built
 881 lodge, they hear a great noise, a song accompanied by the beating
 of drums and blowing of antelope horns. They must not under-
 stand the meaning of the words which are sung by the host of
 shepherds and the men, as it would frighten them too much :

The little boy cries ! Bird of the winter !

881 Here they are halted. Eight of them are chosen and told to
 go forward. Each one is given an assagai, and they are pushed
 between the singers, who hold sticks and stand facing each other

752 in two rows, leaving a passage between them. They thus run the
 881 gauntlet and receive a good whipping; (the flagellation is often also a separation rite); having gone through this unexpected experience they are caught at the other end by four men and deprived of all their clothing. Their hair is also cut, (they must evidently sever themselves from all their past), and they are brought to eight stones and seated on them. These eight stones are not far from the entrance of the yard, in a spot called "the place of the crocodile". Opposite them are eight other stones on which eight men are sitting. These men are called *Nyahambe*, the Lion-men. They have a fearful appearance, their heads being covered with lions' manes. As soon as the boy is seated on the stone facing the Lion-man, he receives a severe blow from behind; he turns his head to see who struck him, and sees one of the shepherds laughing at him. The operator snatches his opportunity; while the attention of the boy is diverted, he seizes the foreskin and cuts it in two movements, first the upper part (this is quickly done and does not cause very much pain), secondly the lower part and the string, a longer and much more painful operation. The surgeons now use an ordinary European knife; formerly they had only native-made knives. Often the boy falls down unconscious; they then throw a jar of cold water over him. All the circumcised receive rings of woven, very soft grass which they put on their wounds, tying them round the loins with a string (*shondlo*). Formerly they did not anoint the sore with medicines: the boys used only to drink a decoction which is said to stop hemorrhage; now they use paraffin externally.

881 The boy has now *crossed* (*wela*, like a boat across a river), a technical expression which shows clearly the character of this rite of passage. He is introduced into the lodge.

The removal of the foreskin, though it cannot have the high spiritual meaning of the Jewish circumcision, seems to me also distinctly a separation rite, this part of the body representing the ancient contemptible childish life from which the initiated emerges to-day.

b) Marginal rites.

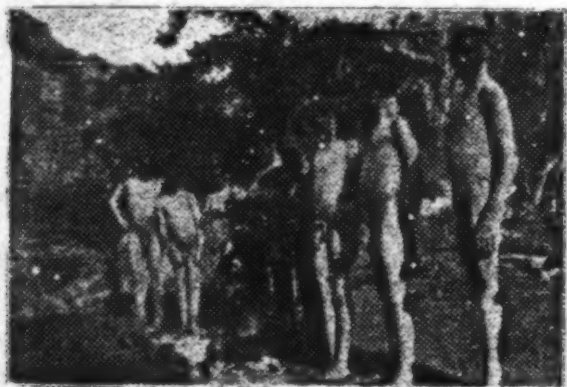
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The newly circumcised boy is now to be three months secluded from society in the "yard of mysteries" called *sungi*. Let us first describe this lodge, and we shall see what his occupations will be during this time of trial.

1. *The Sungi.*

(See the accompanying plan of the lodge).

The whole *sungi* is surrounded by a high fence of thorny branches. This is a sign that all that goes on inside must be

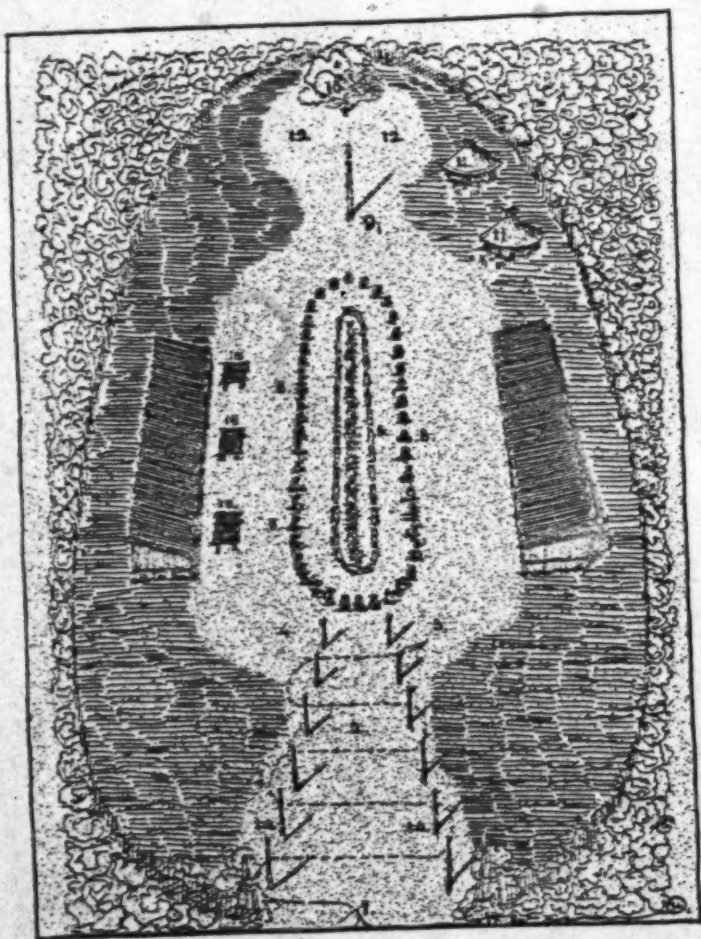


Circumcised boys near Shiluvane.

Photo A. Junod.

kept secret. No one who is not initiated can be allowed to see it, especially women. This fence is extended at the entrance so as to form a long avenue by which one penetrates into the yard. Then the way of access continues between twelve poles arranged in pairs (2). The inmates alone have the right to take the road between the poles. Circumcised visitors (uncircumcised would not be admitted) go round them and cross the road five times so as to reach the men's entrance at the end (3).

349 and not the candidates' gate, which is on the opposite side (4).
881 Further on is the central court of the sungi, with the long fireplace
644 built with stones and called the Elephant (5) round which the boys
 must sit (8), warming their right hips at the fire. The uterine



Plan of the circumcision lodge.

Drawn by J. Warr.

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nephew of the chief, the son of his sister, who takes precedence in all the rites, and who is the first to be circumcised, sits on a special stone with the others behind him. He is called the *Hwatye*. Near the fireside are the tables made of hurdles of reeds on which the porridge of the boys is served every day (15). The central court is occupied on both sides by two square sheds hastily and roughly built, the one on the right (7) being the hut of the shepherds and of the men, the one on the left (6) the hut of the circumcised. The soil is not smeared in these houses. Some of the men also sleep in separate huts behind (11). It is behind the Elephant that the big Mulagaru pole will be raised at the close of the school (9). Further at the back of the sungi is the place of the formulae where the boys are taught (12). A tree sometimes grows in the middle and the instructor climbs up it to impart his teaching (10)!

I have drawn this plan of the sungi with the help of Viguet. Having never seen it with my own eyes, I cannot guarantee that it does not omit many details... But it is correct as a whole.

- 88/ The inmates of the lodge fall into three categories : 1. the "bukwera" viz. the troop of candidates who are to be initiated ; 2. the shepherds (barisi or psitjiba, the boys who light (tjibela) the fire of the Elephant) who waken the circumcised in the morning, accompany them on their hunting trips, watch them when they eat, etc. 3. The grown up men who have volunteered to come and stay in the sungi during the whole school. They eat the flesh of the animals killed by the bukwera, carve pestles, weave baskets, enjoy themselves, and form the council which looks after the well-being of the school. Amongst them are the so-called father and mother of the Ngoma, two men who are specially in charge of the school. The "father" has a difficult task ; he must keep discipline, administer punishment, etc. These two men are paid, as are also the Lion-men and the Manyabe. The Manyabe is the great doctor of the school. He has poured his charms on the fence to protect the lodge against wizards. He does not stay in the sungi, but can be called at any time to administer medicine to the boys who are unwell or whose wounds do not heal properly.

II. *The sexual and language taboos of the sungi.*

881 The whole sungi is taboo to every uninitiated person and
 831 especially to women. A woman who has seen the "shondlo",
 834 viz. the leaves which the circumcised put over their wound,
 784 and which form their only clothing, must be killed. But taboos
 abound for everybody. The sexual taboos are most noteworthy.
 Sexual intercourse is strictly prohibited to all inmates, men as
 well as shepherds; breaking this law would kill the circumcised.
 Therefore the men must not go home, or at least as seldom as
 possible, during these three months. Married people in the
 village may have sexual relations; but there must be no noise, no
 quarrels between jealous co-wives; because, if they insult each
 other and if this is known in the sungi, the shepherds will come
 one evening and plunder that village. Strange to say, in the
 meantime obscene language is permitted and even recommended—
 a contrast which we shall often meet with during the marginal
 periods. Some of the formulae contain expressions which are
 taboo at other times; when the women bring the food to the
 sungi, the shepherds who receive it from their hands are allowed
 to address them with as many unchaste words as they like. The
 mothers themselves have the right of singing obscene songs when
 they pound the mealies for the sungi.

192 As regards language, there are also special expressions used
 881 during the school which are either archaic or foreign; for instance,
 all orders are given in a tongue which is neither Thonga nor Sutho:
 Tshai goma, Go to the table; Thari, Eat; Khedi, Smear with
 white clay, etc. Often actions are not designated by the ordi-
 nary word, but by unusual terms. For instance, the daily
 smearing of the bodies with clay is called: "to eat sheep's fat."
 To put on the leaves of the shondlo is "to eat sheep's flesh."
 To be beaten with the mbuti sticks is "to drink goat's milk."
 Evidently the aim of this terminology is to increase the impression
 of mystery which the rites must convey to the uninitiated.

866 As regards the rites of the marginal period, they are calculated
 881 to give the candidates the impression that they are new men,

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1 : Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga
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Photo H. Com.

Dance of the shepherds and men of the Circumcision school. (Spelonken, 1886.)

866 and that they must prove it by submitting manfully to all the trials of this hard and sometimes cruel initiation.

881 Every morning they smear their bodies with white clay. They are shining; they have abandoned the darkness of childhood. When they have eaten their food they must pick up the crumbs which fall on the ground and throw them away in the pit near the fence, shouting some name in disdain, in an insulting manner, the name of one of the uncircumcised, of a *shuburu* (a term of contempt applied to boys before they pass through the school). This makes them realise their new position.

But the Ngoma "is the shield of buffalo's hide! It is the crocodile which bites!" The candidates must accept all the hardships of initiation. They are taught to suffer.

III. *The trials.*

881 There are six main trials: blows, cold, thirst, unsavoury food, punishment, death.

Blows. On the slightest pretext, they are severely beaten by the shepherds at the order of the men of the sungi. Every day they must sit round the Elephant and, holding a stick in their hands, lunge at it as if to pierce it, for more than an hour. They sing the following words:

Elephant keep still!

Men and shepherds dance round them singing:

The black cow kicks! It kicks against the jug of the baboon!

They themselves represent the black cow which the boys are trying to milk, and kick the boys! In fact during this daily exercise round the Elephant—a rite which is considered as one of the most important of the Ngoma—they beat the naked shoulders of the initiated as much as they like, not so as to bruise them, but quite enough to cause them pain.

When the boys do not eat quickly enough, they are beaten. Sometimes they are sent to catch certain birds of the size of sparrows which they must wrap in leaves, tying them in such

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a clever way that the men will be unable to untie them. Should one of the men succeed in undoing the knots, the boy will get a good thrashing during the meal, and so on.

The unhappy boys who are ill and cannot take part in the hunting trips must be on their guard; when their comrades come back, much excited, they fall upon them with sticks and are allowed to beat them for not having come to help them.

[132]

Cold. The months of June to August are the coldest of the South African winter and, during the night, the temperature falls to 41 Fah., or even lower. The boys lie naked in their shed,



Photo A. Jagers.

Circumcised boys sitting near the fire of "the Elephant"

heads turned towards the central court, and suffer bitterly from the cold. They are allowed to light fires in the court, but not near their feet, and it is said that one of the greatest trials of the Ngoma is that the head is warm and the feet cold. Moreover, they must always lie on their backs. Shepherds keep watch during the night and beat them if they lie on their side. No blanket is allowed, only light grass covers. The soil, not being smeared, swarms with a kind of white worm which bites severely during the night. Ashes are poured on the ground to kill them, but this is of but little use. In certain lodges, when there is a pool in the neighbourhood, the boys are led early in the morning into

881 the water and must remain in it a long time till the sun appears.
 271 The shepherds prevent them from coming out. This is also said to help the wound to heal. (Valdo).

Thirst. It is absolutely forbidden to drink a drop of water during the whole initiation, and this taboo is said to be very painful. Boys sometimes succeed, during their hunting trips, in enticing their shepherds in one direction and in the meantime some of them escape and go to the river to drink. They will be severely punished if caught!

522 *Unsavory food.* The law is that women, the mothers of the
 881 circumcised, must bring plenty of porridge, twice as much as is required for the boys. Should one of them fail to do this she will be punished at a given time. They deposit their pots at some distance, so that they cannot catch any glimpse of the Ngoma, and shout: "Ha tsoo! We are burning." This means: "Our heads are sore from having carried our pots such a long way." Shepherds run to meet them and answer with a great many jokes in rather dubious taste: "We know what is burning with you, etc." Is not this the rule of the Ngoma? The shepherds bring back with them the empty pots of the day before which the women take back to their homes. Should one of them have provided too little food, her pot will be filled with long grass, and when she goes home with her comrades, they will make fun of her. If she does not learn to do better, the "Mother of the Ngoma" will organise a punitive expedition to her village, and kill goats and fowls, and thus make her obey.

881 All the food is placed on the reed tables, and must be eaten by the boys without any seasoning. Should the indulgent mothers have brought some ground nut sauce, it will be confiscated and eaten by the men. When they hear the order: "Tshai goma," the candidates must rush to the tables, kneel down, and, at the word "Thari," seize the food with both hands and swallow it as quickly as possible. If they delay, they are beaten by the shepherds who superintend the meal. When one batch of boys has finished, they must rush to another table where other boys are still struggling with their heap of porridge and help them to finish their portions. Owing to this emulation, the meal does not last

881 long. Sometimes, when game has been plentiful, one of the men comes and squeezes the half-digested grass found in the bowels of an antelope over the porridge, saying to the boys: "You must have something of the results of your hunting too!"

This diet nauseates them at first. They sometimes vomit right on the table. No matter, every particle of the porridge must be eaten all the same. When they are accustomed to the diet, they grow fat, and it is wonderful how their physical appearance sometimes improves during these few months.

Punishments. Blows are punishments for minor offences. Should some more serious fault have been committed, the father of the circumcision condemns the boy to "drink goat's milk." There is a shrub called "mbuti;" the same word also means goat. Three sticks of it are taken. The boy must present his hands, put them against each other and separate the fingers. The sticks are introduced between the fingers and a strong man, taking both ends of the sticks in his hands, presses them together and lifts the poor boy, squeezing and half crushing his fingers.

[688] In former times, the boys who had tried to escape or who had revealed the secrets of the sungi to women, or to the uninitiated, were hanged on the last day of the school and burnt to ashes, together with all the contents of the lodge.

766 *Death.* The circumcised must also be prepared to die if their
881 wound does not heal properly and if the Manyabe's medicine is not successful. Many of them have actually died. It is absolutely forbidden to mourn over them. The mother of the deceased is informed of his death by a notch cut in the edge of the pot in which she brings the food. She must not cry. The corpse is buried in a wet place, in a grave dug with sticks, as it would make people suspicious if the shepherds were to go to the village and fetch spades for this work.

IV. *The teaching of formulae.*

881 So the boys are taught endurance, obedience, manliness. But there is another side to the training of the Ngoma. It has sometimes been compared to a school, and it is true that there is some

539 intellectual learning in it, though very scanty and insignificant.
881 Every morning the candidates are brought together to the place of the formulae (nau-milau, law, prescription). There is a tree in the midst of this square. A special instructor, whose father has already exercised this function, climbs up the tree and begins to teach the boys. He says :

Little boys, do you hear me. I say...

Then come the words of the secret formulae which are a great taboo and which they must learn by heart, sentence after sentence. I have collected some of them, Thonga and Pedi. Here I will reproduce only the Thonga. They are partly incomprehensible, even to the initiated. The first is called *Manhengwana*. It is the name of a bird.

Masumanyana a nga suma...
 The little bird has sung.
 A nga suma tinghala ta timbingo...
 It has stirred the handles of the lances which are like lions...
 Tentuba ku ya thabana...
 They pierce each other...
 Manhengu. Manhengu bentshile. Bentsha tirula...
 The bird...
 Fula ngoma... Mukhubela wa hantana...
 Forged at the lodge. Clouds come from all parts.
 Milumbyana saben. Sabe khulu ra berimi.
 Rivulets in the sand, forming the great Sabi.
 Ntje-ntje bya agulube... Bya shinana sha rila...
 The running of the wild pig... Of the frog which cries...
 Byi longolokile byi ya kamba ntjonga wa mbila.
 They are walking in good order, they go to visit the mysterious hut.
 Ba kuma byi ri busonga, songa bya timhiri ni timhamba...
 They find it like the twisted rings of the adder.

These words, so far as they have a sense, seem to extol the Ngoma and its lodge. These assagais, which are like lions which are going to tear each other, represent the school which is starting, awakened by the bird of the winter. The clouds coming from all directions are the boys converging on the sungi from all parts of the country, like rivulets which join together to form a great river. The running of the wild pig is the life of the boy who was idling away his time till initiation made a man of him. The croaking of the frog (shinana) is his childish stupidity. The

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881 shinana is a strange animal indeed, a small Batracian which is able, when attacked, to swell considerably : then it becomes so hard that its enemies, even a cock with a sharp beak, cannot pierce it. The circumcised boy, before initiation, was a shinana before it swelled up. By the trials of the Ngoma, he will become like this frog, an invulnerable and untamable adversary. (1) In the last sentences we see the bukwea, the troupe of the circumcised, penetrating into the mysterious hut, into the Ngoma, and wondering at the extraordinary wisdom which is found there. The laws, rites and trials are like the inextricable intermingling of many snakes.

The sungi is then celebrated again in the following sentences :

A mi ri i sungi...

Say, it is the lodge.

Hansi ka rona, i tleketleka,

On the ground, there is a disgusting smell,

Henhla ka rona i thulawula...

On the roof, it is elevated and beautiful...

Makomole i mhandje...

Its supports are poles...

Tinga hi hala n djibalele...

Long rods unite the poles... etc.

Nwaijabatjabane a nga tjabatjaba...

The heavy body which goes on heavily...

Shikari ka mipungu ni mahlanga...

Through the drifts and the reeds...

Mahaka ya le ndjako, marumbu a wela ndjen.

Which must be cut open from behind, because its bowels fall down inside its body.

I ngwenya.

It is the crocodile.

Shiborekeketa mahlaluku makambaku...

The beast which opens the road to the drifts for the elephants...

A ta hi ku nwa ni ku hlamba...

It goes to drink and to bathe...

A mi ri mufubu ?

Do you not say, it is the hippopotamus ?

Nwaijabatjabane makandiya ka ku oma...

The beast which marches slowly on the dry ground...

Ku sa ku baleka nhlangai,

And a marsh is formed by its heavy footsteps,

Ndlophu, shibangamaphesa a nga riphenbe, hi yona...

It is the elephant, the one who provides clothing (by the sale of its teeth) the one who brings wealth, it is he !

(1) Another explanation : The running to and fro of the wild pig describes the coming and going of the men who bring the boys to the "place of the crocodile," like pigs searching for their prey. The "Shinana" which cries is the little circumcised boy whose voice is hardly heard amidst all the noise of that terrible day. He is a small powerless thing, like the frog.

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These formulae are so characteristic that they provide the principal pass words by which the circumcised recognize each other. Should I want to know if a man is initiated, I should say to him: "*Mashindla bya ndjako*, the beast which must be opened from behind." If he answers at once: "*Ngwenya*, the



Phot. A. Basel

Cutting open a crocodile near the Nkomati river.

crocodile," I know that he has been circumcised. But he must add the following words: "*khekeretana wa mufagu*" i. e. "the knife which circumcises."

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There are also some obscene formulae which refer to certain diseases of women, of which not a word is told outside the Ngoma. Some others are so ugly that I can give them only in Latin (*Annotatio quarta*).⁴ Even the formulae of the crocodile

¹/₂ [See p. 516 in these categories or in 116 -- analyst]

831 and of the hippopotamus are by no means poetic descriptions of these big animals similar to those contained in the book of Job. The first alludes to the manner in which the male crocodile copulates with his female. And the second tells the story of a virgin girl whom the young boys violate in order to open the way to the grown up men who will follow them. Impure allusions are found everywhere in this teaching of the circumcision school.

When the instructor has finished, he lifts his stick with a certain gesture and all the boys shout at once: "Zithari!" Viguet told me that that exclamation meant: "They are as long as that" and that it was an obscene allusion. The old men take great delight in being flattered and, if the boys wish to add to their pleasure, they will say: "When you spit, the wind from your mouth would kill enemies at the other end of the country!"

As is plain from these quotations, the teaching of the Ngoma is quite trivial, and the formulae are rather a collection of esoteric words than a true intellectual training.

533 *The songs of the Ngoma have no deeper meaning. We have*
881 *seen already the song of the Elephant and of the Winter-bird... Every morning, just after they wake, the circumcised sing for a long time the following words, which they repeat also when coming back from hunting trips.*

Sing your song, bird of the morn
 Mafé-t-t-t!

The melody is rude, wild but very impressive. Mafé-t-t-t must mean: "We are the initiated, we are the men!"

224 *Hunting.* Hunting is the only useful thing taught in the
881 *Ngoma. Boys go almost every day to the velt and become very*
868 *clever in catching game. They beat the bush, sometimes climb hills and chase all the game to the top, killing it there with their assagais, knobkerries, etc. Near Shiluvane they even attack the Mamotsuiri mountain once during their three months. All the men of the country are summoned to take part in the big expedition, which requires real strategic skill.*

881 *To sum up the rites of this marginal period of the Circumcision school, this is the programme of a day in the sungi. The shepherds*

881 awaken the boys very early. They sing for one hour the Winter-bird. Then they learn the formulae for one or two hours. Afterwards the order: "Tshayi goma" is given and they throw away the leaves of the day before and put on a new "shondlo." They go and sit round the Elephant and stab him for two hours till a shout is heard: the women bringing the food announce that they have come. The boys eat for the first time, and sing again to help digestion. At the command: "Khedhi goma," they smear their bodies with white clay. The sun is already high in the sky when they start for their hunting trip. They come back at sunset, eat for the second time, stab the Elephant again for one hour and at the command "Khwerere, Mayise, Mafefo," they go to their beds on the dirty soil of their but.

c) Aggregation Rites.

1. The *Mulagaru*.

769 The first aggregation rite takes place many days before the
 881 conclusion of the school. One morning, very early, the men and the shepherds raise a very big pole in the yard of the formulae and fix it into a hole. At its extremity is a man, half hidden in white hair (1). The boys are awakened and led by the shepherds into the yard. They are told to lie down on their backs, all their heads turned towards the pole, which is called *mulagaru*, and to say: "Good morning, grandfather." Then a voice comes from the top of the pole and says: "I greet you, my grandchildren." They must remain a long time in that position in the biting cold of the morning, talking with the "grandfather." They are allowed even to complain of their sufferings and to ask permission to return home. But they still have to stay some days in the sungi. Every morning this ceremony will be repeated. It clearly means that the boys are being put into communication with the ancestor who represents the clan, that they are beginning to be admitted to the adult life of the tribe.

(1) In some circumcision schools this man is called *kokwana Masinde*, a name which is applied to old women.

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A few days later, the great doctor administers to the boys a purifying medicine which they drink in a mouthful of beer. This rite seems to be rather a separation than an aggregation rite. We often find, when a marginal period comes to an end, separation rites taking place. They mean separation from the *marginal period* itself; for this also involved a kind of pollution which must be removed. Such is probably the aim of the medicine given by the Manyabe. On the other hand, this is also an aggregation rite, as the boys are allowed to drink again for the first time.

II. *The Mayiwayiwane dance.*

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The second true aggregation rite is called the Mayiwayiwane dance. The *Mayiwayiwane* are a sort of masks which cover the whole of the upper part of the body, a kind of armour made of woven palm leaves; on the head, they are like a very high helmet protruding in front like a beak. The boys make these masks with the help of the shepherds and of the men and, in this disguise, must perform



A Mayiwayiwane mask (1).

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a special dance with high jumps before the women summoned on a certain day to attend. The boys must not be recognized. Should one of them let the mask fall, it would be a great misfortune, because women must not know who is dancing. Moreover the initiated must appear before them as a kind of supernatural beings and fill them with respect and awe. Therefore they must not fall when they dance. Should one of them totter and lose his equilibrium, the shepherds cover him

(1) This mask is that worn by Pedi boys during the second circumcision school. I cannot guarantee that the Mayiwayiwane mask is of exactly the same pattern.

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with a heap of grass and the men say : " He is dead !," because a circumcised boy cannot fall and live. One of the shepherds goes in haste to a village of the neighbouring tribe and buys a fowl ; this is killed and its blood is sprinkled over the grass ; the boy who fell escapes when the women have gone home, but the next day, when they come back to the spot, they see the blood and are convinced that, in very truth, one of the circumcised dies when he falls!

Sometimes a little child is taken from the arms of its mother and brought to the place where the boys are sitting hidden during the dance. They kiss him and smile at him, because he is innocent ; he may see what women are not allowed to contemplate!

III. *The last day.*

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The last day is marked by the greatest and most difficult trial. During the whole preceding night, the boys are not allowed to sleep. Sleep is the last enemy they must overcome. They stab the Elephant and repeat the formulae till the morning. Then all the bits of skin remaining from the circumcising are picked up by the Manyabe ; he burns them, and makes them into a powder with which he smears the mulagaru pole. All the masks and grass mats are thrown on to the roof of the shed and, at dawn, the troop of circumcised, surrounded by the shepherds and men, is directed towards a pool and made to run to it without looking backwards ; (separation from the sungi, from the seclusion period). If they were to look at what is taking place behind them, their eyes would be pierced, and they would be blind for ever! Fire is set to the whole establishment by some of the men, and all the filth and ignorance of childhood is burnt in this great conflagration. The boys are led into the water, wash away the white clay shouting : " I am a man," cut their hair (separation rite), anoint themselves with ochre, put on new clothing and are addressed by the father of the circumcision :

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" You are no longer *shuburu*! Try now to behave like men. It would be unworthy of you to steal sweet potatoes in the fields as you used to do before. Now the Ngoma is closed and it is taboo

881 to pronounce the formulae or to sing the songs of the sungi. Don't reveal a word of them to anybody; if a boy does so he will be strangled!" etc.

That same day the women bring porridge with sauce flavourings and the shepherds are no longer allowed to use insulting words when they receive the pots from their hands.

IV. *The Chameleon procession.*

553 All these are evidently aggregation rites. But the greatest of all is the procession of the initiated into the capital of the chief which takes place on the day of the closing of the sungi and on the following day. Covered with ochre, marching on mats which have been spread on the ground so that they do not touch the dust with their feet, they advance slowly, bowed to the ground, stretching out first one leg and then the other, with a sudden brisk motion, trying to imitate the gait of the chameleon, the wise, the prudent. They are men who think, and no longer boys without intelligence! Then they all sit in the central place of the capital, silent, with their heads still bent, and the sisters and mothers who have come from all the different villages must go and recognize them. Each woman brings with her a bracelet or a shilling or any small present and searches for her boy amongst the throng. When she thinks she has found him, she kisses him on the cheek and gives him the present. The boys have two sticks in their hands. One stick bears some short lateral branches on which the boys will hang the bracelets (busenga). The other is smaller and, when the mother has discovered her son and has kissed him, he strikes her, a soft blow if it is his mother or his grandmother, a much harder one if it is his sister, and utters the new name which he has chosen.

In answer to this demonstration, the mother begins to dance and to sing the praises of her son! This is the typical aggregation rite called *kunga*, the breaking of silence, which we shall meet with more than once in the passage rites of the tribe. These bracelets are all given in to the chief, who will distribute them amongst the old women. It would be taboo to give them to childbearing women. According to the same idea the fees paid by the boys to

881 the chief must not be used by him to buy a wife. This would pollute the village (makhuma). It would cause unfortunate births (timbeleko) and ruin the life of the people.

The chameleon procession is performed in the villages of the main headmen of the tribe during the few following days till, at last, the ochre of the initiated is removed and they return home definitely.

SOME REMARKS ON THE CIRCUMCISION SCHOOL

177 The square form of the sungi sheds, so different from the circular form adopted by the Bantus for their homes and implements, might be the trace of a Semitic influence. But, on the whole, all these rites are closely connected together and their sequence is quite easy to understand.

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822 The Ngoma is truly a puberty rite, but not a sexual initiation. The suspension of conjugal relations, and the prevalence of licentious language might give the idea that it is in direct relation with the sexual life. But these two phenomena are met with on other occasions, as we shall see, and seem to be characteristic occurrences in most of the marginal periods. Moreover boys of ten and twelve and men of twenty-five or more can occasionally be admitted to the sungi, and this proves that the school has nothing to do with marriage, properly speaking. Neither is the Ngoma a pure act of aggregation to a definite clan. Boys of one clan often go to the sungi of another chief to be initiated; they do not become his subjects by so doing. Even Thongas sometimes enter into Sutho lodges and Ma-Lemba have a special place in them. It is true that the Ngoma is the business of the chief. Only those who are really chiefs have the right to build a lodge. But though the initiated are exhorted to become good subjects of their chief, the intention of the circumcision school is rather to introduce the little boy into manhood, to cleanse him from the *bukhuma* (p. 58) to make him a thoughtful adult member of the community.

(See practical conclusion on Circumcision Rites at the end of Vol. I.)

II. Other Puberty Rites.

881 The Ngoma has disappeared in most of the Thonga clans, but
178 there are a few other puberty rites which have been preserved all through the tribe.

1) THE CUSTOM OF THE EROTIC DREAM (Tilorela).

881 When a young man has noticed for the first time an emissio
195 seminis, he is said to have become an adult (a kulile, a thombile)
751 to have "drunk the nkanye." The nkanye is the tree from
which the bukanye is made. It is prepared for the great feast of
the new year. To drink the nkanye is an euphemism to designate
the entrance into a new phase of life, into the age of puberty.
According to Mboza, the lad must go early in the morning to
wash his body, and that is all. But Tobane says that, in the
Mpfumo clan, the family doctor is called; in a broken pot, he
roasts pieces of skin of all the beasts of the veldt, together with
some half digested grass taken from the stomach of a goat (psanyi).
The boy must eat a little of this medicine and rub all his joints
with it. This will strengthen him so that, when he has relations
with girls, he will not be overcome (gemiwa) by them. This rite,
which is very similar to the rite of the broken pot performed for
infants, is connected with the "gangisa," the sexual habits of young
people which begin at the time of puberty, as we shall see later on.

881 At this time also, the boy begins to wear the very primitive
291 clothing called *shifadq* (sha ku siba, the thing with which one
177 closes, see Annotatio I). In former times they wore only the *mbayi*,
789 a small cylindrical or conical object of woven palm leaves, which
832 was the national dress of the Thongas; the *shifado* seems to be of
Zulu origin. It is very much valued as preventing contact with
the earth, as a protection against ants and an aid to continence;
the lads who do not wear it are blamed and accused of being
ba-nato. The word *nato* means a magical medicine by means of
which men of low morals throw men or women into a deep sleep
during the night, enter the huts of other people and commit
adultery with their wives.

2) THE PIERCING OF THE EARS (Ku tjunya, (Ro.), boshela. (Dj.).

881 This also takes place at this period. There are two ways of
304 performing it, either by an actual piercing of the lower lobe
177 with a thorn, or by cutting it with a knife. The first method

1[See p. 516 in these categories or in 116 - Analyst]

881 is the old Thonga custom, and has been preserved by the women
304 in its original form, at least amongst the Ba-Ronga ; they frequently
177 pass a ring through the small opening thus produced. The second
was practised by the Zulu-Ngonis, and was adopted by the Thonga
men in order to resemble their conquerors. The result is an ugly
hole. This is not a law imposed by the chief ; it is however
universally observed. When a lad does not pierce his ears, his
comrades mock him, saying. " U toya ! " " You are a coward !
We shall put a spoonful of porridge in this big ear of yours ! "
(Viz. It will hold food because it is not pierced!)

881 The operation is performed in the winter by a man who
304 knows how to do it. Before it is begun, the boy bites the *ndjao*,
824 the root of a kind of juncus which is considered the best means
833 of strengthening the virile force. The doctor introduces into
the hole a small piece of reed ; he takes it out every day to wash
the wound and puts it in again to keep the hole open. As long
as the ear is not healed, the lad must eat his food without salt :
he must not go about in the kraals and partake of the porridge of
other people, because this food might have been prepared by
women having intercourse with their husbands (ba ku khila)
and this would make him very ill (1). He must also keep away
from girls. When he is healed, he takes away the piece of hard
reed and replaces it by a pretty white object.

304 Some Thongas tatoo themselves, or used to do so formerly,
178 but this custom is disappearing and is now preserved only by
women. We shall describe it in the chapter on the evolution
of the woman, as well as the *hlela* custom, the pointing of the
teeth.

It is probable that in former times the taboo character of these
various ceremonies was more marked than now. At present they
are merely a *shihila sha tiko*, a custom of the country.

(1) This alimentary taboo, as well as the interdiction of sexual relations, even of
intercourse with married people, clearly shows that the piercing of the ears is a ritual
passage. (p. 74).

524 put aside. She must be very clever and very quick in removing and replacing all the stones except one, because the ball will soon fall down and she must catch it in her hands. Should she take only one stone out of the hole, she has failed (a tjongolile); should she leave more than one stone outside of it, she has again failed (a hoshile). Should the ball fall to the ground, it is taboo. (psa yila)! She has lost her turn. If the ball falls on her body, it is not so bad. Her companions will say to her: "Gangasheta." Then she must throw the ball and catch it two or three times on the upper part of her hand, then again in her hand, and if she succeeds in this, she is allowed to go on. When she has been able to take all the stones from the hole without making any mistake, she has beaten her co-players (a ba mphyinshile).

525 Natives do not play for stakes as a rule, but, if two of them challenge each other, each claiming to be the best at the game, they may arrange that the one who loses must give a fowl to the winner.

The ordinary word for *play* is *ku tlanga*. But there is another word *ku tha*, which is used for the more refined games, the buhlolo, the mathakusana, the tshuba, the reciting of tales, riddles or proverbs (psitekatekisa) and guessing games (mhumhana). We shall describe these four last games when treating of the life of the village and literary life.

II. Nubility customs.

1) THE KHOMBA RITE.

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When a girl comes of age, no special ceremony is performed amongst the Ba-Ronga. She is said, just like the boy, to have "drunk the nkanye" (page 95). She confesses to her mother that her menses (*tinwheti*, viz. *months*) have appeared for the first time, and the mother simply answers: "Hi ku kula"—"this means growth."

881 But in the Northern clans a characteristic rite has been preserved, or borrowed from the Sutho-Pedis, who attach great importance to it. It is called *khomba*, or *yisa matin*, to lead to the water, and is performed in the following manner. The girl, when she thinks that the time of nubility is near, chooses an adoptive mother, possibly in a neighbouring village. She works for her, and helps her in gathering her fuel. When the day has come, she runs away from her village and goes to this adoptive mother "to weep near her" (a rilela ka yena). These are distinct separation rites. She says: "Ndji khombile" — "I am of age." Then will begin a *seclusion period* of one month. Three or four girls receive the initiation together. They are shut up in a hut, and when they come out, must always wear over their face a veil consisting of a very dirty and greasy cloth. Every morning they are led to the pool, and their whole body is immersed in the water as far as the neck. Other initiated girls or women accompany them singing obscene songs, and drive away with sticks any man who happens to be on the road, as no man is allowed to see a girl during this period. If a man happens to come near the group, the women ask him the secret formulae of the circumcision school, not the long ones but the short ones, probably those which contain licentious words. Should he be unable to answer, they beat him. It is said that a man who sees a girl during this month becomes blind! When the cortege of women accompanying the initiated has returned home, the nubile girls are imprisoned in the hut. They are teased, pinched, scratched by the adoptive mothers or by other women; they must also listen to the licentious songs which are sung to them. Though they are trembling from cold, being still wet, they are not allowed to come near the fire. They are also instructed in sexual matters, and told that they must never reveal anything about the blood of the menses to a man. They are also exhorted to be very polite to every grown up person, and must salute everybody entering the hut, even those passing before the door, by clapping their hands. Sometimes the wind moves some dead leaves; they mistake this noise for the sound of steps and salute reverently!

881 At the end of the month the adoptive mother brings the girl

881 home to her true mother. She also presents her with a pot of beer. A feast takes place on this occasion and the kunga rite is performed, just as for the circumcised boy on the day of his aggregation (page 93). Little presents will be brought by the girl to her adoptive mother who will distribute them to old women. If the initiated girl has been already bought by lobola, the mother goes with her to her future husband and says to him: "She is grown up." He will give her a present of £ 1., and the veil will be taken away. These last rites distinctly mean the aggregation of the girl to adult society, and all this khomba custom is a very good example of a passage rite, the passage being from the asexual to the sexual group.

881 The Pedi-Sutho clans of the Transvaal also practise this rite,
178 which they call *khoba*. In addition they have the *bale*, the initiation school for girls, corresponding to the circumcision school of the boys. The Nkuna clan of the Thongas is said to have practised it also in former times, but the *bale* has entirely disappeared all through the Thonga tribe.

There are three other customs more or less related to nubility: tattooing, the pointing of the teeth and the milebe custom.

2) TATTOOING (Tlhabela tinhlanga).

304 There have been different methods of tattooing amongst the Thongas. In former times, in the Northern clans, the Ba-Thonga used to disfigure themselves by making very big black pimples on the forehead, the nose, and the cheeks. Hence the name of *Knobneusen* which they received from the Boers in Spelonken. Even the men were tattooed, but they shewed only one line of pimples down the middle of the face, from the forehead to the chin. Women had, in addition, two horizontal lines on the forehead and three on each cheek. It was a custom of the primitive population and is still observed by the Ba-Chopi. The invaders of the XVth or XVIth century adopted it because they were mocked by their subjects, who said: "Flat noses are

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right!" When the Ba-Ngoni of the XIXth century came, they submitted themselves to the custom, not from fear of mockery, but to hide their Zulu nationality. Chaka had sent his impis to kill them and, as they were recognised by the absence of pimples, they began to tattoo themselves. When the danger was passed,

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Phot. H.-A. Junod.

Tattooed women of the Nkuna clan.

they ceased to perform the operation. They began in their turn to mock the Thongas who had followed their example.

Amo.gst the Ba-Ronga it is not certain that the big black pimples ever existed. In former times men used to make two lines of small pimples on both sides of the body, extending from the nipple and from the shoulders downwards. Now the custom

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is dying out; it is practised only by women, undoubtedly in connection with nubility or with marriage. But the tattooing of the face has disappeared almost entirely. What remains is the tattooing of the shoulders and of the epigastric and hypogastric regions.

The operation is painful; girls sometimes cry and must be forced to submit to it. The patterns are triangular. Four triangles are first drawn on the shoulders on both sides; the upper triangles meeting with the lower ones at their apex, so as to leave a square place, not tattooed, in the middle of the back. This drawing is made with ochre; the skin is caught up and lifted with a little iron hook all along the line and slightly cut with a razor. All the incisions must be of the same size. The blood oozes out and is stopped by the ochre; which is profusely spread over the small wounds. Tattooing of the back is not very painful. It is more so on the anterior part of the body. These four triangles are also drawn under the breasts, leaving a square place of which the navel occupies the exact centre. But between the two upper triangles two others are introduced, forming a conical shaped pyramid whose point comes between the breasts.

Such is the ordinary arrangement of the tattoo pimples in Nondwane, but it varies considerably according to the clans, as the two adjoining plates clearly show. The two Nkuna women, whom I photographed at Shiluvane in 1900, have only two lines of pimples, forming a right angle under their right breast. The Rev. Alex. Jaques has kindly sent me two other photographs of tattooed Tembe girls taken in August 1926 and Mrs. Jaques has drawn an enlarged figure of the marks which shows plainly the patterns adopted in that part of the country. I reproduce them in a second illustration. Here the four triangles are distinctly seen.

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The freshly tattooed girl hides herself for a week, after which she shows herself to her boy (shigango), who will kill a fowl for her to congratulate her. He says: "It is pretty to tattoo yourself. Otherwise your belly would be like the belly of a fish, or of a white person!" The time of healing is considered as a disease (perhaps as a marginal period). It is taboo to put salt in the food during

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these days, or to go to the village to eat the food of other people (just as it is for boys who pierce their ears). Girls prepare themselves for the operation by eating a special food which softens

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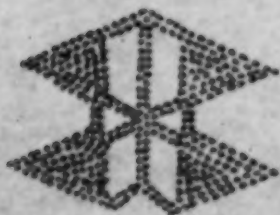


Photo. A. Junod.

Tattooed women of the Tembe clan.

the skin of the belly (nabyala khuri). All these rules tend to show that, in former times, tattooing had a deep meaning, a ritual value which has more or less disappeared. Mboza told me: "It is not a regular taboo (yila), but only a custom (shihila) of the country."

3) POINTING OF THE TEETH (Ku hleta).

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881 This custom is also dying out. It used to be incumbent on all the girls. Now many do not observe it. They have seen that teeth deformed in this way decay more quickly. The operation is performed on the incisors, and girls must keep their mouths closed for two or three days, not showing their teeth to anybody.

Near Rikatla, the hleta custom was still in force in the heathen villages in 1910. It gives the girls a kind of canine aspect.

4) THE MILERE CUSTOM.

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171 This is very wide-spread all over South Africa. Though it has disappeared now amongst most of the Ronga clans, it is still practised in the Manyisa country, over the whole of Bilen and in the Northern clans, amongst the Zulus, the Pedi-Suthos, etc. It is probably the origin of the famous "Hottentot apron," which some ethnographers thought to be a congenital malformation, and which is merely the result of this custom (Annotatio 5). It is a very ugly habit, very immoral from our point of view, fixing the imagination of the girl on sexual relations, but amongst the Thongas it is upheld as being quite the right thing.

B. MARRIAGE AND CONJUGAL LIFE

1) CONDITIONS OF MARRIAGE

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832 In the primitive Bantu tribe every girl gets married, some, however, sooner than others. Suitors prefer pretty girls to ugly ones! But what is their standard of beauty? The ideal is tall stature, strong limbs and well developed breasts. A proverb

[See p. 517 in these categories on in 116-Analysis]

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857 However, specially appointed persons watch over him and report of his well being to his father. His youthful playmates are taught to respect him; he is surrounded in his games by a miniature court, from which he chooses his favourites (tinsekwa); some of his companions act as counsellors and reprimand those who do not treat him with due respect. They play at court... also at soldiers; the juvenile troop wage war with the wasps, and also with the boys of the adjoining villages.

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782 When the child reaches boyhood, the bones are consulted, and sacrifices offered in order to ascertain from the gods whether it be well to take him to the capital. Should the answer be in the negative, there is nothing to do but wait. When the dice declare the propitious moment to have arrived, the transfer is effected and the boy taken to his father. This is a great occasion for the counsellors who have watched over the boy and who thenceforward supervise his education. They feast themselves well (ba fumi-sana), kill goats, perhaps even an ox, and offer a sacrifice to proclaim to the gods the return to the capital of the heir to the throne; to his ankle is tied the astragalus of a slaughtered goat, as a protective amulet.

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836 At puberty the boy undergoes, in the same manner as his companions, all the ceremonial rites usual at that period. The principal doctors of the country treat him, in order that henceforth he may be a man (ba mu yimisa a ba wanuna), having full right to enter into the sexual relations of gangisa (p. 97). Care is taken, however, to attach to his person comrades of riper age, who will prevent him giving way to excesses. (suka banhwanyana la' bakulu ba ta mu gema, ba mu sibela ku kula), which would arrest his growth and render him small and feeble. He thus lives in relative continence, participating in the play and in the work of boys of his own age, and looking after the herds. At times he gives a feast, when his father happens to have presented him with an ox with which to make merry.

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595 Now we see him arrived at manhood, at the age when the Blacks take a wife. If his father is still living, the young man is not allowed to marry officially. He may certainly lobola, viz., contract regular marriage in the usual way, and possibly

APPENDIX II (See p. 40)

On Thonga names, nicknames and surnames.

553 As an illustration of the way in which the Thongas change their names, I give the story of those of Mboza and Elias.

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553 Mboza was called at his birth "Mulamule," after his paternal uncle. The whole name was, in Zulu: "Mulamula nkwinzi izilwako," viz., "the man who calms the bull which fights." At about the age of sixteen, he changed it to Mahubula. At that time he was trying to collect divinatory bones in order to become a diviner. He had called one of these bones "Hubula," and after that his comrades began to apply the name to him. He was seized by the "folly of gods." (Part. VI). When he was cured of this pretended possession, the spirit which made itself known called itself Mboza. This was the name of a man of his village, his own nephew, who had gone to Johannesburg and had died there. When he became a Christian, and was baptised, Mboza kept his name. Most of the Natives like to take another name on that occasion, the name of a disciple or of a prophet. We are not very ready to comply with their wish, as we have already too many Daniels, Jonas and Petros, and Mboza probably yielded to this argument.

551 Elias was called "Shifenyio" on the day of his birth, after a man who happened to pass through the village. This visitor was a kind of beggar who used to follow people carrying food to the chief, hoping to get something to eat. The child was of a good family, but they gave him the name of this low and despised individual, a truly democratic act! When he was older, one of his friends said to him: "Your name does not suit you. Call yourself Spoon." He adopted the new appellation, and the women of his village used to make fun of him saying: "Come along, we will distribute the food with this spoon!"
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551 When baptised a Christian he became Elias, a somewhat onerous name, especially as our Elias is not as strong and perfect as a prophet ought to be... But Natives never shrink from assuming great names. They always feel themselves equal to them!

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551 The names adopted at puberty by boys are very often European ones. There are scores of Jims, Sams, Bobs, etc. They also adopt as names European words or words of European origin, as: Spoon, Nglazi (glass) Komitshi (cup), Djass (jacket), Fulitshi (forage), Fifteen, etc.

Latin Notes for Medical Men and Ethnographers

291 "Annotatio prima (P. 40). --'Shifado' quo quisque Thonga
 845 extremum penem vestit, spheroides excavataque res est;
 848 quod tegimentum ex iis, quæ ad pudorem et munditiam perti-
 881 nent, postulatur. Si quis schifado suum amisit, ei dedecori est."

Note 1 (page 40). Shifado, with which every Thonga covers the end of his penis, is a spherical and hollowed-out object; this covering is demanded from those who are concerned with decency and cleanliness. If anyone has lost his schifado [sic] he is disgraced.

"Olim apud Thonga, qui a populo Zulo illum morem acceperunt, viri, quod linguâ 'mbayi' id est fistulam quandam ex foliis textis palmæ quæ 'milala' dicitur, ferre solebant.

[At one time among the Thonga, who took over this custom from the Zulu people, the men used to wear what in their language is called mbayi, that is, some kind of tube made of palm leaves woven together which is called milala.]

"Ultima 'mbayi' anno 1895 vel 1896 post Christum natum visa sunt. Quod shifado ex parvæ cucurbitæ cortice aut duro et excavato accurateque polito ligno factum, summo veretro affixum, minime incommode ferre videntur."

[The last mbayi were seen in the year 1895 or 1896. Because the shifado is made of the rind of a small gourd or of hard, hollowed-out and carefully polished wood, and attached at the top of the private parts, it seems that it can be worn with the minimum of discomfort.]

833 "Annotatio secunda (P. 56). S. n. i, sc. semine non im-
 851 misso. Ad hoc, marito sperma foras spargendum est (a nga
 842 mu weleri): hic est coitus rite factus et quasi lustralis. Inde,
 765 uxor in manus utriusque sordes (thyaka ra bona) sumit, qui-
 783 bus umbilicum illinit."

[Note 2 (page 56). S. n. i., that is, the semen has not been injected. Moreover the husband must eject his sperms outside of the body (a nga mu weleri): this is the coitus properly executed and, as it were, lustral. Then the wife takes in her hands the filth of both (thyaka ra bona) and smears the navel with it.]

"Annotatio tertia (P. 57). Corpus infimum pueri ex adverso et a tergo peni pater tangit.

[Note 3 (page 57). The father touches with his penis the lowest part of the boy's body from the front and from behind.]

831 "Annotatio quarta (P. 88). Hæc sunt formulæ:

881 Shana khololwane ma ri tibi le'ri onhaka milebe?
 Novistisne avem quæ labra minora lædit?

831 -I mbolo ya shuburu.

881 -Penis est incircumcisi viri.

Banhwanyana ba ka Makwakwa ba kundja na ba hlanamile.
N'yini?

Puellæ ex regione Makwakwa manibus apertis coeunt. Quid
significant hæc verba?

-I mahlehlwa.

-Est semen mahlehlwa.

(Hlehlwa is the seed of a creeper growing along the ground;
this seed [517] is of the same size as a two shilling piece and
possesses, in its central part, two hooks standing up.)

[Note 4 (page 88): these are the formulæ:

Shana khololwane ma ri tiba le'ri onhaka milebe?

Do you know the bird that injures the labia minora?

-I mbolo ya shuburu.

It is the penis of an uncircumcised man.

Banhwanyana ba ka Makwakwa ba kundja na ba hlanamile.

N'yini?

The girls from the region of Makwakwa have intercourse
with open hands. What do these words mean?

-I mahlehlwa.

-Mahlehlwa is the semen.

(Hlehlwa is the seed of a creeper growing along the ground;
this seed [517] is of the same size as a two shilling piece and
possesses, in its central part, two hooks standing up.)]

832 "Annotatio quinta (P. 98. 182). Externorum genitalium

836 minora labra verbo milebe (singul. nebe) designantur, quæ

304 puellæ adeo trahere solent ut ea usque ad quinque, decem,

881 etiam quindecim centimetra extendant. Quæ labra nonnunquam

171 parvis baculis metiuntur, eorum longitudine, apud comites
suas, immo apud sponsores, gloriantes. Istis pravis moribus
enim nihil aliud puellæ sequuntur nisi futuri mariti gratiam,
cui apud Ba-Pedi, si sponsam suam labra non satis ex-
tendisse arbitratur, eam domum dimittere et boves suos
reposcere licet. Puellæ aululam pulmenti plenam parant quam
operculo claudunt. Ad quas pueri vespere veniunt et stipem
dant ut admittantur. In casae solo considunt et puellas cen-
antes spectant dum digitos in aululam demittunt. Puellæ
quarum milebe quatuor digitos longa sunt, quatuor digitis
usque comedunt; bakuly, sunt, f. e. adultæ, et lætantur am-
atores. Aut tribus tantum, duobus aliquando utantur.
Adolescentulæ cavis manibus cenant.

[Note 5 (pages 98 and 182). The labia minora of the outer
genitals are called by the word milebe (singular nebe), and
the girls are in the habit of pulling them so much that they
extend from five or ten to as many as fifteen centimeters.

832 Sometimes the girls measure their labia with small sticks
 836 and boast of their length to their companions and even to their
 304 bridegrooms. The girls follow these perverse practices for
 881 no other reason than for the sake of their future husband.

171 Among the Ba-Pedi the husband may, if he thinks that his
 bride has not sufficiently stretched her labia, send her home
 and demand his bulls back. The girls keep a pot full of food
 ready and cover it with a lid. In the evening the boys come
 to the girls and give them a small gift in order to be admitted.
 In the house they sit down on the floor and watch the girls eat-
 ing from a pot with their fingers. The girls whose milebe are
 four digits long eat using four fingers: they are bakulu, that
 is, adult, and they enjoy their lovers. Or they use only three
 fingers and sometimes two. The young girls eat with the
 palms of their hands.]

765 "Annotatio sexta (P. 154). Seu quis per ætatem iam pro-
 783 vectam imbecillior factus erit, sive qualibet de causa tam
 833 impotens ut sperma emittere non possit (a nga kumi mati),
 ceteri viri quid fiat sciscitabuntur. Quod si utique parum
 procedit, tota inhibetur cærimonia. Qui vero se invicem
 eodem ritu miscere debebant, iis ritum conficere non fas est.
 Ille jejuno, per quinque dies, prout res postulat, artissime
 utetur, cui medicinæ ad rem accommodatæ exquirentur.

[Note 6 (page 154). If someone should have become feeble
 because of advanced age, or if for some reason he should be
 so impotent that he cannot emit sperms (a nga kumi mati),
 other men ask what should be done. For if it proceeds quite
 insufficiently, the whole ceremony is held up. And those who
 should have had intercourse in turn in the same ritual fashion
 are not permitted to complete the rite. He [the impotent man]
 has to fast very strictly for five days as the situation requires
 and the remedies appropriate to the situation will be sought.]

843 "Annotatio septima (P. 154). Nocens maritus uxorque sui
 834 purgandi causâ alium ritum peragent. Uxor mariti suæque
 841 pudenda veste intima et inquinatissima tergebit, quam postea
 comburet.

Ambo, ad ignem accedentes, caput manusque calefacient.
 Inde cinerem collectum mulier adipe miscet, quo mariti
 artus illinit, digitis brachiis cruribusque tractis, quod
 'lula' dicitur. Postea, noctibus duabus sequentibus, coibunt.
 Si maritus, non cum uxore sua, sed cum puella quadam ex
 alio vico, stupri consuetudinem junxerit, huic fossorium
 donabitur, ut ritum 'lula' perfectum veniat.

[Note 7 (page 154). If the husband and the wife are guilty
 of an offense, they perform another rite for the sake of
 purging themselves. The wife will cover her husband's and

177 Whatever the teacher may say, they escape... I must confess that we do not control them as well as the Father of the Circumcision... The Ngoma shows us however that strict discipline is quite possible with Native boys and that we must deal with them without any touch of harshness, of course, but with a firm hand. When the inmates of our institutions complain that the sauce of their porridge is not savoury enough, we might remind them of the food their heathen comrades are eating in the Ngoma!

881 There is a striking resemblance between Bantu circumcision, Jewish circumcision and Christian baptism.

In Jewish circumcision, the same physical operation was performed, but it was performed on infants. It had undoubtedly also the meaning of a purification, a removal of pollution and an introduction into the holy nation. In the course of time, the idea was spiritualised and circumcision meant the removal of sin. But it had a strongly religious character: Jahvé marked his chosen people by their circumcision. This religious element is wanting in the Ngoma of the Thongas and the Suthos, where the national significance alone remains.

As regards baptism, the great difference between the heathen and the Christian rite is evidently this. Christian baptism is not only a religious but also a moral rite. In its normal form, which is the immersion of adult catechumens, it represents in a striking manner the washing away of sin and the admission to the Church of Christ; it is a rite of passage; separation from the old life of sin, marginal period of instruction, admission into a holy community...

The Ngoma has no such spiritual and moral idea attached to it, but it has been inspired by the same deep and true sense of the necessity in the evolution of man, of a progress consisting in the renunciation of a miserable past and the introduction into a higher life. This idea is one of those rays of light which we are happy to discover amidst the darkness of heathendom, one of those "points d'attache" to which we can link the truths of spiritual religion.

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881 What ought to be the attitude of the Government and of Missions towards this custom? As regards Governments, they could not immediately suppress the circumcision schools, though they have often been asked to do so, but it would seem that they might use their influence in checking them. As for the Mission, it has naturally fought against this school of heathenism, but not always with success; boys, even Christian boys, are wonderfully attracted by it and many have left their

177 spelling-books for the formulæ of Manhengwane. Strange to say, it
797 frequently happens that girls refuse to marry men who have not passed
881 through this initiation! These facts, together with the legitimate wish
to give African Christianity a true national character, have suggested to
some missionaries the idea of establishing *Christian Circumcision
Schools*: In a special meeting at the Conference of Le Zoute, Septem-
ber 1926, Canon Lucas of the Universities Mission told his colleagues
the results of an experiment of this kind at his station of Masasi.
The missionary himself took control of all proceedings. The boys
began by entering the church, the elders representing the old men of the
tribe. They were circumcised in the camp which had been previously
blessed and the operation was performed by a qualified Native who had
been trained by medical men. The parents of the boys were waiting
outside the camp, dancing. When all the boys had been circumcised,
they were told by the manager of the camp that this was done to
incorporate them into the tribe, and the parents again engaged in a big
dance. The men remained on the spot and proceeded to the erection
of the buildings of the camp where the circumcised were kept for some
weeks, and carefully treated till all of them were healed. During this
period of seclusion, they received instead of the obscene formulæ,
teaching bearing on seven subjects: truth, honour, purity, abstinence
from drink, humility, love of one's neighbour and duties toward God.
They had also to pass through various physical trials, and, at the end,
they were exhorted to do penance for their past sins. Their hair was
cut, and burnt together with their clothing and all the camp buildings.
The parents were then summoned and danced the whole night, the men
mysteriously bringing new clothing for the initiated. The boys then
went to church, and, answering a question put by the missionary, they
said: "I ask of God that I may be a righteous man." A special blessing
was then given to them. An interesting fact is that the heathen
population approved of this Christian Circumcision School and accepted
it as an equivalent to the old. Some heathen parents even sent their
sons to it! Seven hundred boys have already been received in it and
Canon Lucas has gained an enormous influence over them! I only
000 mention this attempt to "sublimate" the circumcision rites. Some
missionaries are strongly opposed to this new departure, which they
regard as a dangerous mixture of Christian ideas and heathen rites.
Without expressing a definite opinion on the subject, I would insist on
the point just mentioned: the real, genuine rite of passage of Christian-
ity is baptism, and the African Church might perhaps be satisfied with

I never heard a distinction made between fixed stars and 821 planets. They are all called *tinyeleti*. The best-known is 772 Venus, which bears many names. Not knowing that the evening 881 and morning star are one and the same, they have given it different names. The evening star is *Gumbashilalelo*, the one which steals the evening meal, because it appears when people are eating it, or *khwekhweti*, the brilliant star, or *Nkata wa hweti*, the moon's husband (as the two are often seen close together); the morning star is called *Ngongomela*, or *Khwezu*, and is greatly lauded as the herald of day. It gives the warriors the signal for starting on a war-like expedition: the warriors can easily kill their enemies under cover of the darkness, and the sun will soon appear and help them to complete their victory. Travellers also start on their journey when they see it: the dawn will soon be here! Lit by its light, candidates for circumcision leave the village of the chief to go to the house of initiation. According to one of my informants (I. p. 75) there is a profound and mystic idea in this custom: Ngongomela announces the day; so little boys must be conducted by the morning star when they abandon their childhood and all its ignorance to enter the adult life with all its knowledge. It leads them from darkness into the light! So Venus plays a great part in Thonga customs. It is the great star. Notice the feminine suffix *eti* in one of its names. It may have been personified in former times.

The *Pleiades* are the only constellation which bears a name 821 in Thonga. They call it *shirimelo*, the one which announces 772 the tilling season, because, in fact, in the lands situated in the Tropic of Cancer, it rises in July or August, when tilling is resumed. I have not heard of any other constellation known to the Natives. They have no notion whatever of constellations: their mind does not seem to have tried to group the stars, or to have seen figures of animals, or objects, in the sky; their imagination in this domain is very poor, and they remain far behind the Oriental nations in this respect.

Falling stars are looked on as a bad omen. When they see 821 one falling towards a certain point of the horizon, Natives think 787 that a Chief must have died in the country towards which the 789